

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 3734

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS/ MILI, CB

SUBJECT: NEW CONSCRIPTION EFFORT

1. SUMMARY. THE NEW CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN HAS GOT OFF TO A POOR START. MONETARY AND MATERIAL SHORTAGES, INTER-DEPARTMENTAL BICKERING, AND COMMUNICATIONS FAILURES HAVE BEEN PERHAPS THE MAIN PROBLEMS, BUT INERTIA AND PROCRASTINATION HAVE ALSO FIGURED AS CAUSES. WE ARE URGING ALL CONCERNED TO MOVE MUCH MORE QUICKLY. END SUMMARY.

2. A SURVEY OF SECOND LEVEL CITY DIVISIONS (SANGKATS) BY EMBASSY OFFICERS INDICATED THAT ONLY ONE-THIRD HAVE BEGUN TO ISSUE DRAFT NOTICES BASED ON THE NEW CENSUS. THE TOTAL OF NOTICES FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS ONLY 341. A NUMBER OF REASONS WERE GIVEN FOR THE POOR SHOWING AT THE SANGKAT LEVEL:

A. SOME OF THE SANGKATS APPARENTLY MISUNDERSTOOD INSTRUCTIONS AND WERE AWAITING TABULATION OF THE CENSUS OF 18-35 YEAR OLDS BEFORE ISSUING NOTICES. (WE HAVE AGAIN URGED CONSCRIPTION CHIEF OF STAFF BG YOUNG YOC HANG TO ASSIGN INSPECTORS TO EACH SANGKAT BUT TO DATE HE HAS ONLY BEEN ABLE TO STAFF THE FIRST LEVEL DIVISIONS (KHANDS)

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WITH HIS REPRESENTATIVES.)

B. LACK OF GASOLINE PREVENTED SANGKATS FROM GATHERING CENSUS RESULTS AND, IN THE CASE OF THE CITY'S LARGEST SANGKAT, FROM COMPLETING THE CENSUS. (YONG YOC HANG ASSURED US THAT GASOLINE WAS PROCURED TODAY FOR THIS PURPOSE.)

C. FUNDS TO PURCHASE PAPER FOR TABULATING THE CENSUS RESULTS WERE NOT AVAILABLE. (AT OUR REQUEST, THE MINISTER OF FINANCE HAS ORDERED THAT ADEQUATE FUNDS BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY.)

D. NO CIVIL SERVANTS ARE BEING CONVOKED PENDING A MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DECISION ON WHICH CAN BE DEFERRED. (WE WILL PROD MINISTER OF DEFENSE MG THAPPANA NGINN ON THIS MATTER.)

E. ATTENTION OF SANGKHAT OFFICIALS HAS BEEN DEFLECTED BY PREPARATIONS ORDERED BY MARSHAL FOR MARCH 18 ANNIVERSARY OF SIHANOUK'S OUSTER.

3. SIMILAR PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED BY THE FIRST LEVEL DIVISIONS (KHANDS), ALTHOUGH THEIR WORK WILL BE LIGHT UNTIL THE SANGKATS HAVE ISSUED MORE DRAFT NOTICES. DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN ONLY 91 MEN RESPONDED TO DRAFT CONVOCATIONS OF WHOM 53 WERE INDUCTED. VOLUNTEERS APPEARING WITHOUT BEING CONVOKED NUMBERED 266. JOINT STAFF REPRESENTATIVES HAVE ARRIVED AT THE PRINCIPAL KHANDS. TYPEWRITERS APPEAR TO BE THEIR PRINCIPAL SHORTAGE. (WE HAVE URGED THEM TO BORROW MACHINES FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICES.)

4. THE MIXED TEAMS TO ROUND UP DESERTERS AND DRAFT DODGERS ARE DOING VIRTUALLY NOTHING AT ALL. THE REASONS GIVEN FOR THEIR INACTIVITY BY YON YOC HANG AND NATIONAL GENDARMERIE COMMANDER COL. HEM SIVETH WERE:

A. THEY HAVE NO TRANSPORTATION AND HAVE LITERALLY BEEN FORCED TO HIRE PEDICABS TO TAKE DESERTERS TO PLACES OF DETENTION. (THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS
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PROMISED TO SUPPLY 30 VEHICLES A FEW HOURS EACH DAY FOR THE NEEDS OF THE SANGKATS AND THE MIXED TEAMS BEGINNING TODAY (MARCH 13).

B. AGREEMENT HAS NOT BEEN REACHED ON WHO IS TO FEED THE DESERTERS PENDING THEIR ASSIGNMENT TO UNITS IN ENCLAVES. (FANK DIRECTOR OF FINANCE ASSURED US MARCH 11 THAT DEFENSE FUNDS HAVE NOW BEEN MADE AVAILABLE.)

C. MIXED TEAMS HAVE A MORALE PROBLEM RESULTING FROM FANK CINC MG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ HAVING ALLOWED DESERTERS PREVIOUSLY PICKED UP TO BE RETURNED TO THEIR ORIGINAL UNITS. (THIS PROCEDURE SHOULD BE A THING OF THE PAST AS ORDERS REQUIRING DESERTERS TO BE FINED A MONTH'S PAY AND SENT TO ENCLAVES BECAME EFFECTIVE MARCH 1.)

D. NO PROCEDURES HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO SCREEN DESERTERS PICKED UP TO DETERMINE WHICH WERE IN FACT PERMANENTLY ABSENT FROM UNITS AT COMMANDERS PERMISSION, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE PUNISHING COMMANDERS RATHER THAN ABSENTEES, AND WHICH WERE TRUE DESERTERS. (A DISCIPLINARY BATTALION UNDER THE FANK INSPECTOR GENERAL IS BEING FORMED TO ASSUME THIS AND ALLIED FUNCTIONS.)

E. SOME SANGKATS HAVE EXHAUSTED THEIR FORMER INADEQUATE LIST OF DRAFT DODGERS AND A 10-DAY WAIT IS REQUIRED BEFORE THOSE NOT RESPONDING TO CURRENT NOTICES CAN BE PICKED UP. ONLY THREE SANGKATS HAVE THUS FAR PUT OUT NEW LISTS OF DRAFT DODGERS.

5. YONG YOC HANG ATTRIBUTES DEFICIENCIES OF HIS HEADQUARTERS TO:

A. LACK OF OFFICE SPACE (THIS WAS CORRECTED MARCH 11, WHEN HE MOVED FROM CITY HALL'S GARAGE TO SPACIOUS QUARTERS DOWN TOWN.)

B. LACK OF A VEHICLE (WE ARE SURVEYING POSSIBILITY OF GETTING FANK JEEP FOR HIS HEADQUARTERS).

C. LACK OF FUNDS TO PAY 100 RIELS DUE ILOT, 50-
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HOUSE AND 10-HOUSE CHIEFS, WHICH MADE HIM AND HIS STAFF RELUCTANT TO MAKE NECESSARY INSPECTIONS AT THIS LEVEL. (ADEQUATE FUNDS HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED BY MINISTER OF FINANCE TODAY AND YONG YOC HANG, A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ORATOR, IS PLANNING A SERIES OF EVENING VISITS TO THE ILOTS BEGINNING LATER THIS WEEK.)

5. WE SURMISE THAT ALL OF THE SMALL OBSTACLES DESCRIBED ABOVE HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED BY THE RELUCTANCE OF VIRTUALLY ALL OFFICIALS INVOLVED, BUT PARTICULARLY NATIONAL GENDARMERIE COMMANDER HEN SIVETH, PHNOM PENH GOVERNOR UN TRAMUCH, AND CERTAIN KHAND AND SANGKAT CHIEFS, TO TAKE THE UNPOPULAR STEPS NECESSARY TO BRING MEN INTO THE ARMY. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROD OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS DAILY. A MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETING TO DISCUSS PROGRESS AND

FUTURE PLANS IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 15.
ENDERS

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